

Soft Rot of *Dracaena deremensis* 'Janet Craig'
caused by *Erwinia carotovora* ssp. *carotovora*
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INTRODUCTION: *Dracaena deremensis* Engler (a member of the Liliaceae family) is native to tropical Africa (Baily 1976). 'Janet Craig' (a green sport of *D. deremensis* 'Wameckii') has erect, dark green, lustrous leaves corrugated lengthwise (Graf 1982; Huxley 1992). It is widely grown in containers for use in interiorscapes and in the home.

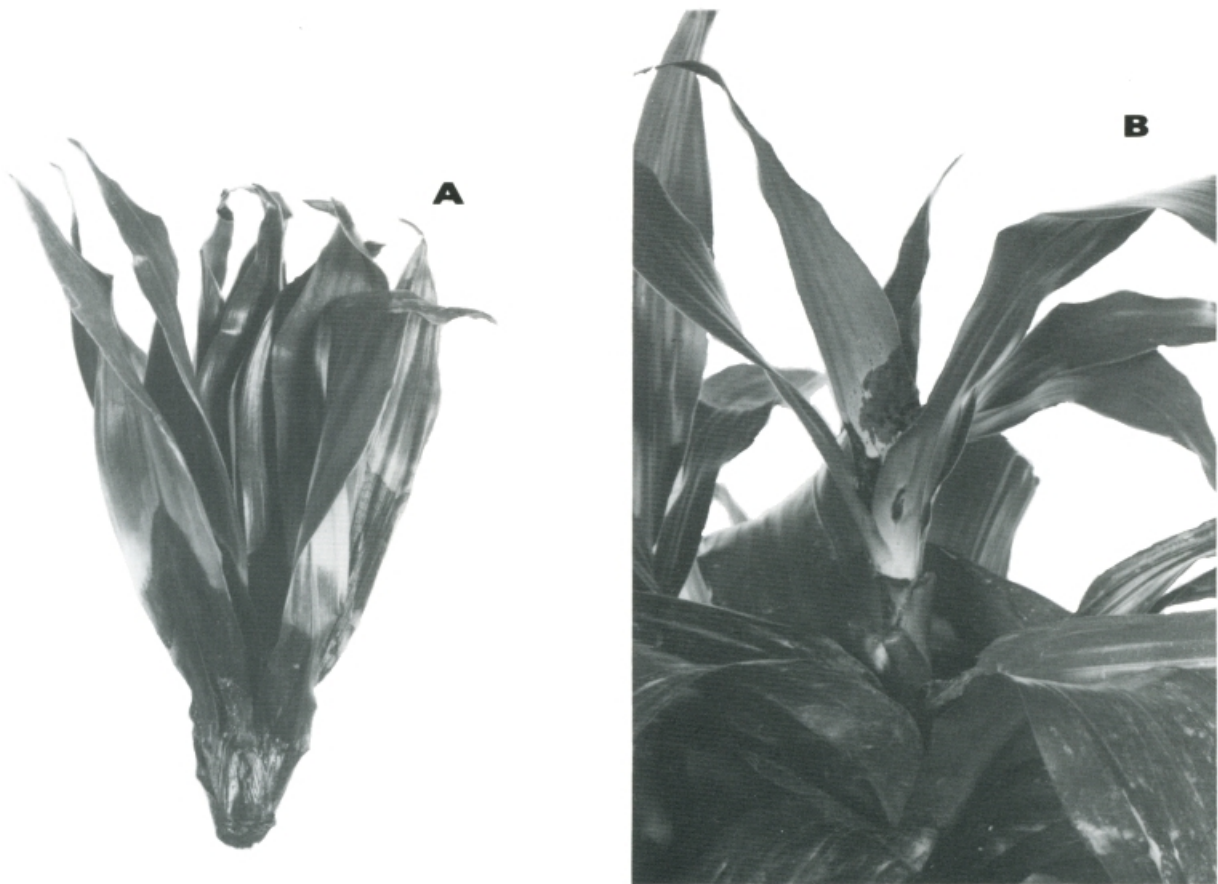


Fig. 1. A) Soft, brown decay of cuttings of *Dracaena deremensis* 'Janet Craig' caused by *Erwinia carotovora* ssp. *carotovora*. B) Same on an established plant. Photography credit: V. Jane Windsor.

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Dracaena cuttings commonly develop a soft rot at the base, especially those from offshore that have been packed in containers for some time. Established plants, as well as other *Dracaena* spp., can be affected by this disease as well. The soft rot bacterium, *Erwinia carotovora* ssp. *carotovora* (Jones) Bergey, Harrison, Breed, Hammer, and Huntton was consistently isolated by Miller (1982) from the diseased tissue and proved to be the causal agent.

SYMPTOMS: On cuttings, symptoms begin as a dark green water-soaking of the base, followed by a soft, brown, mushy decay extending upward (Fig. 1, A). On established plants, the water-soaking begins in the bud and progresses up the leaves from the bases (Fig. 1, B). Alternate darker and lighter zones often develop in the diseased tissues (Miller 1982). The disease is not systemic. Experimentally, symptoms can be produced only in wounded tissues. The disease is favored by hot, wet conditions.

HOST RANGE: Other major hosts included Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema* spp.), dumbcane (*Dieffenbachia* spp.), philodendron (*Philodendron* spp.), and Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera X buckleyi* (T. Moore) Tjaden).

CONTROL: Keep cuttings as dry and cool as possible during shipment. Avoid additional injury to cuttings or any kind of damage to growing plants. Eliminate overhead irrigation of established plants. Consult Simone (1993) for control recommendations. Established plants may be saved by pruning out all diseased tissue and allowing new, clean buds to develop. It is likely the disease could be transmitted back and forth among these and other hosts if plants are grown close together, either by handling or by splashing water.

LITERATURE CITED:

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